5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin M54

it on over his old one, and since none of his garments are ever removed, the older garment gradually falls to pieces and after a while disappears altogether. This story, like much of the fiction of the world, though not strictly accurate is based on painful truth, for baths are not so frequent in the Bedouin's life as they should be, and the laundering of clothes is still less adequate.

But it is easy to blame the Bedouin for being dirty. Dirty he certainly is and his clothes even more so, but what is to be expected when water is so scarce that for lack of it animals frequently go thirsty, and sometimes even men? We forget that cleanliness is a luxury, and a very expensive luxury at that. Through the summer the Bedouin women wash their hair in camel's urine because water is so precious that it cannot be wasted for such a purpose. The men apparently go without washing. Clothes require no comment, for their condition is what might be imagined. By far the commonest hunting in Arabia is the hunt for wild game in the hair and clothes. It is always successful. The ablutions required before prayers are commonly performed with sand. The delight of such people upon arriving at some place where water is abundant and where bodies and clothes can be washed is a good thing to see.

The diet of these desert Arabs is ordinarily very frugal. A drink of camel's milk and a handful of dates are a day's rations for an adult, and more is not expected. There will also be an occasional drink of coffee, of which the Bedouin is inordinately fond. Even the poorest Bedouin tent will have some sort of a battered and worn coffee pot for this purpose. Bread is a rare luxury in such homes, and meat even a rarer one. A feeble old camel on the verge of dissolution will render a last service

21c Fisher S-4 (no date) 1950 M1 Middle East M1
Bedouin MJ4.15

B 619

the group. Yet although tribal solidarity and discipline are conspicuous features, it has been the weakness of Badawin society throughout the ages that political combinations larger than the tribe have been achieved merely for a very short time. An outstanding leader has brought together a number of tribes into one larger unit, but union has proved temporary; and more often than not on the death of the leader, his organisation has dissolved again into smaller groups. Large-scale political organisation is therefore not a feature of Badawin society, and resulting inter-tribal feuds, inveterate warfare, political instability and inconstancy have had an effect not merely on desert and steppe life, but also on that of the settled lands of the arid borders. It is also possible to see why, in the absence of strong internal political organisation, so much of the Middle East has in the past fallen under the control of outside powers.

B 619 423

To each tribe belong certain rights of pasture and occupation. The limits of each tribal territory are carefully defined, and generally comprise a summer and a winter camping ground. Exact size of territory usually has a certain relation to the physical force and prestige commanded by each tribe, and limits therefore vary from one period to another. Weaker tribes seek 'protection' from a larger.

M 641 B 641

As a sample of tribal division, the distribution of Badawin in Syria is given below. It should be noted that in certain instances tribal territories cross international frontiers, and thus there arise special problems of administration. Agreements have been concluded between the governments [illegible] whereby nomads in effect assume temporarily the nationality of the country in which they find themselves.

B 422 342

Because of the necessity for constant movement, the material culture of the Badawin is poor. Chief possession of the tribesman, after his animals, is a tent, usually black, and woven of camel or goat hair. When in good repair, these tents are quite waterproof—sufficient to withstand the infrequent, but severe downpours which occur—and the size of the tent, shown by the number of tent poles used, is an indication of the affluence and social standing of the owner. The interior is divided, on the right for men, and on the left for women. One side away from the wind is usually left open, with a coffee hearth in front. The coffee hearth is the social centre of the household; and the head of the family, although leaving the entire preparation of food to his womenfolk, will himself undertake the preparation and serving of coffee. True Bedu coffee is strong, devoid of milk or sugar, but

B 556

B 352 418 262 462 278 000

21: Fisher S-4 (no date) 1950 M1 Middle East Bedouin M34 117

True Bedu coffee is strong, devoid of milk or sugar but flavoured with herbs; and its consumption is the occasion of much social activity—the rounding off of the day, and an opportunity for discussion, and the reception of guests. For the Badawin, if not for city dwellers, coffee is truly the 'wine of Islam', and the equipment of all Badawin households includes at least one carpet, which is spread before the hearth, a mortar, and coffee pots and cups. A few cooking pots, and one or two large trays and bowls for communal eating make up the remainder of the culinary equipment.

Clothing of the Badawin is simple. A long robe of thick material is the principal, sometimes in fact the only, garment. In winter a waterproof cloak of woven camel hair is worn. A voluminous headcloth, held in place by a rope or band, is wound round the head so as to give protection to the face and neck, and rawhide, heelless sandals are worn on the feet.

Water is usually too precious for much washing[1]—indeed, the Koran permits the ceremonial use of sand in the daily ablutions which are enjoined on all Moslems—and animal urine is frequently used as a substitute. Badawin food is monotonous and scanty. Most important are milk products: curds, buttermilk, various kinds of cheese—of which *labné*, a kind of cream cheese, is the most widespread—and *samné*, or butter. In addition, wheat, barley, and occasionally a little rice are obtained by barter, blackmail, or brigandage from agriculturalists, or else grown very sporadically by the nomads themselves.[2] Small amounts of dried fruit, usually dates, are also eaten. Meat is provided only as a great luxury, since animals themselves are in effect a kind of fixed capital—owners must live from the yield, not upon the animal itself. Apart, then, from occasions of high festival, when special slaughtering takes place, only those animals that die naturally are eaten.

Meals are served first to the older men of the tent, each man using his dagger as a knife, and fingers as a fork,[3] after which, when they are satisfied, it is the turn of the younger men and boys. Later still come the women, and finally the girls—the sexes never intermingling during meals. On occasion when supplies are plentiful, the Badawin

[1] It has been said of a present-day certain Wahhabi tribe of Arabia that all adult members have at least once in their lifetime been forced to exist on water taken from the hump of a camel.

[2] Patches of ground are roughly sown with grain, and later in the year tribesmen return to harvest the crop.

[3] As far as possible, use of the left hand is avoided in polite Arab society—this hand is employed for menial and unpleasant tasks.

li Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins M34

As we neared the large tent, the merry "ringing" of the coffee mortar bade us welcome. Malla Sulumeh, scribe to Sheykh Tai', conducted us within.

A considerable number of tribesmen were gathered in the roomy tent. As usual, the favourite falcon of the *sheykh* stood perched on a camel-saddle.

A slave removed the bird and placed cushions on the saddle for us. The coffee-cook poked apart the pieces of glowing desert roots on the hearth and poured between them dried camel dung from a fold of his cloak. He blew energetically on the hard nuggets, the size of walnuts, until small bright flames commenced to dance all over them. Then a large, beaked can was placed on the glow and it was not long before the coffee-water boiled and bubbled over. "Revive thy spirit!" said the ever-ready cup-bearer as he offered me the aromatic cup.

Previously he had, in accordance with Bedouin practice, conscientiously wiped out every cup with the sleeve of his old shirt. Adroitly he held in his other hand four small china cups without handles, like so many eggs in a nest, and jingled them lightly one against the other.

The coffee made the round. The favoured guests, whom the Negro served first (unhappily I belonged to them) were the victims of especial politeness; before pouring the coffee, he spat first into the cup and wiped it dry with his shirt sleeve. Three times had I to endure this rite at the hands of the punctilious coffee-priest, who waited on us with the utmost solemnity on each occasion. Only then might I waggle the cup between my finger-tips in token of thanks and satisfaction and hand it back to him.

L Dickson G-6 (1929-47) 1951 MS I Kuwait
Bedouins MS4

only shy little Barrak comes up
576 to Amsha's side and cuddles up in her arms. She loves him almost more than her own daughter. She kisses him and fondles him, and allows him to put his head on her shoulder and gaze up at me with wide eyes. Amsha is pathetically fond of her two slave children. They are only five and three respectively. Such love and such tenderness would make the brains of those busybodies whirl, who talk so glibly of the cruelty and horrors of the slave problem. How is it done? The answer is simple. These babes, the sons of her stalwart slave, 'Abdullah* (bought originally from Rannia and married to a freed 'Ajman slave woman), call out every womanly instinct in Amsha. They are the offspring of her own property. They are hers to prize and cherish. She even opens up her gown† and offers her breast to little Barrak who is fidgeting somewhat. "There, keep quiet, ya *habibi* (little sweet one), will you," she says, "and let us hear news from Abu Sa'ud."

272 Presently Salim comes back again with the coffee-pot, and the
415 special cups which he has brought back from Riyadh, little white and yellow-ochre ones, unknown among the people of Kuwait. With pride he once again offers me coffee. "The cups? Oh yes, they are from Riyadh. I brought them back for Um Sa'ud (my wife), when she returns from England." "The year has been a good one, *Al*
231 *hamdu 'l Illah*," he proceeds. "The camels are fat and their humps are so round you wouldn't recognize them." "Nay, Abu Sa'ud", chimes in Amsha, "you would not know Fatha except for her nose ring. She has such a big hump now that a saddle cannot be put on her. And congratulate us, thirty-six lambs have been born in the last ten days, and Zahra's (my daughter's) brown ewe which was a baby two years ago has had her first lamb also, her first-born, so sweet and soft. Run and fetch it, ya Hamra." The lamb is produced and much admired. Its wee tail is duly weighed in my hand to see if it has got any fat on it. "And now you must come and see our baby camel", and away I am taken by the womenfolk to the back of the tent where a dozen she-camels are standing. They have just come in from water, and are waiting to be milked and bedded down for the night. The baby-camel is next caught and brought to me. It is wonderfully tame, and holds

* He died the following year (1935) after returning sick from Mecca.

† If an Arab woman suckles her little slave child, that child can never be sold as a slave. It is henceforth free and her own.

h Dickson G-S (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

342. (1) "Spread out the tent *yo 'ahyā!*" (O my people) (from its rolled up
4342. position when taken off the camel's back).
(2) "Stretch out the ropes *yo awlād!*" (O children) (so that they are at
right angles to the tent).
(3) "Anchor the rope ends in the ground *yo fulan wa fulan*" (O So-and-So).
(4) or "Drive in the pegs and wind the ropes round them *yo Nasir.*"
(5) "Tighten the ropes *yo Hasan, yo Walīd.*"
(6) "Take a pull on the end ropes *yo Marzūk, yo Nasir.*"
(7) "Affix the *mujādīr*" (front-side, support-poles.) This is done on side
away from wind.
(8) "Raise the centre poles"—the men's job.
(9) "Raise the back side poles and remaining end side poles."
(10) "Now lay to and take a pull at all the ropes once more."
(11) "Now *rawwaqu al ḥais*, i.e. attach the *ruag* or back and side curtains,
and cover the lower edge with sand to keep them down."
(12) "Now affix the *gita* or partition curtains."
(13) Lastly, "Spread out the carpet and the *dawshaks* and get ready the
women's and men's portions of the tent". Women's quarters centre
and left (*murgad al ḥarim*), men's quarters right (*murgad al rijāl*).

The tent is now fully pitched and the women place their treasures and stores in the centre portion of the tent, including their litters (*mahmal, ghita*, etc.), sleeping gear, blankets, food, etc., and transfer to the end compartment the cooking pots, cooking utensils, etc., turning it into a sort of kitchen.

MEN'S PORTION OF THE TENT

342. 879 In the men's portion of the tent are then unrolled a well-worn carpet or two, the best *dawshaks* (mattresses), to sit on, and the master's own camel saddle covered with white or black sheepskin. Pillows (*masnad*) are placed on both sides of this camel saddle, and also behind it for the guest's back to rest on, and generally the place is turned into a neat guest chamber for anyone who may [411] come. The master now hangs up his rifle on a hook attached to the 415 tent pole in the guest chamber, and prepares a fireplace to make coffee 272. in the centre of the floor by digging out a shallow circular hole (*wajār*). This done, he gets out his row of three coffee pots (*dalla*), also a fourth "stock" pot, and lays them alongside the fireplace, together with the *mahmasa* (coffee roaster) and *yad al mahmasa* (coffee-berry stirrer).

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Last of all he places in position the *akar finajin* (brass case for coffee cups) alongside the *yed wal hdwan* (brass pestle and mortar), the *mahaarrad* (wooden slipper for cooling coffee beans), the *mukhbit* (wooden peg for stirring the hot coffee), the *lifa* (coir piece to stuff into the coffee-pot's spout), and finally the *mukhbir* (incense burner). All is now ready to receive a guest, except that the actual coffee beans, the cardamum seed to mix with the coffee, the firewood (*'arfaj* bush) and the *jalla* camel manure (in place of coal) and the drinking water, is round in the women's part of the tent or outside it, and will have to be fetched.

As a guest is seen arriving these last necessities are brought and by the time he sits down, firewood, *jalla*, etc., all are ready to hand.

The scheme of things in a poor Badawin tent is the same, only everything is on a very much more modest scale—in fact, according to his purse.

A man leaning on the guest saddle is said to be *mutrachi*; if he leans his back against a cushion (*mutrad*), he is said to be *mutarawwad*. If he tells a story he sits cross-legged; when eating he kneels on his left knee and sits on his left heel; his eating hand works outside his right upright knee; when he washes his hands he squats with knees wide apart.

WOMEN'S PORTION OF THE TENT

Women and servants (if any) carry all cooking utensils, etc., into the women's apartment and cooking portion of the tent, the heavy baggage and bags containing rice, flour, dates, salt, sugar are stored up against the *gata* curtain dividing the women's front the men's apartments. The camel saddle-bags are then hung up on the tent poles, as well as other odds and ends, including the owner's spare rifle and ammunition. Red *lahafs* or quilts, which take the place of blankets, are then rolled up and placed on top of the stores, and the woman of the house and her daughter's decorated *mahbars* (litters) are placed in a prominent position on the other side of the tent, so as to be seen by passers by.

Not the least important of the women's treasures are the spindles (*magbiyal*), with which the womenfolk in their spare time spin camels' or sheep's wool. These they are for ever whirring, whether on the

Badawin Meals

264 up also and wash their hands 'n token of having finished. The result is that to avoid having to leave the table hungry, guests learn to bolt their food in most harmful style.

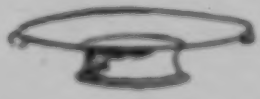
272 The favourite drinks among sheep-owning Badawin are *laben* (butter-milk) and *roba* (thick curdled milk). The shepherd tribes (Shawâwi) prepare their *laben* from sheep's milk, the camel tribes (Bédia) from camels' milk. The latter has to be boiled first, before it is shaken up in skins. Normally a camel-owning tribe will give a guest plain camels' milk to drink. *Laben* is not often offered.

Camels' milk has no cream on it, and so butter can be got from it. It is a purgative, and should be taken in moderation by European travellers or persons not used to it.

MEALS

A Badawin lunch or dinner

264 252 Among the Badawin proper the banquet of a shaikh is served on a large, round, tinned copper tray (*sanîya*) on which is piled up, a foot high, boiled rice covered with yellow gravy made from the fat of the sheep, and on top of all is placed a boiled young sheep or lamb (always a male). If the shaikh happens to favour Najd manners and customs, the tray will stand on a pedestal (all in one piece) called *sanîya abu kursi*; this is shaped thus:



and translated means "The tray, father of the chair". The whole is now placed on a *sifra* or circular mat, corresponding to our tablecloth.

The Badawin call the cooked rice *'eysh* and the whole sheep *dhabîhah* or *milli* (lamb). Both are cooked rather crudely and for our taste there is usually far too much *semn* or *dehen* (clarified butter) mixed with the cooking. The meat is usually rather tough, unless a young lamb happens to have been killed. Nevertheless, if you are 264 hungry this form of banquet tastes remarkably good. The most tasty bits of meat and the tenderest are the strips along both sides of the

h Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI I Kuwait
Bedouins M/4

backbone, the muscles of the shoulders and the muscles of the leg near the knuckle: the tongue, the kidneys, the cheek bits and the eyes, are also well-known delicacies. The fat of the tail is always looked upon as the guest's particular right. The Arabian sheep is of the fat-tailed variety unknown in England. Round the central dish of rice and meat, the shaikh places two or three bowls of *laben*, with lumps of rather dirty butter floating in it—also a plate or two of dates. The guest, after finishing his meal, drinks *laben*, and then turns to the dates, which he eats with the butter floating in the *laben*. These dates and butter, especially if the dates are fresh (*rusul*), are delicious.

Prior to the meal, and after the meal, coffee is handed round. Among the Badawin coffee is rather a poor and watery stuff, and following the Najd fashion is made with lots of *hail* (cardamom) in it. After lunch, it is polite to thank your host with a *Allah i kathir khair ak* or a *'An'am Allah 'alaik* (God increase your good works! or God reward you!).

It is also quite correct to make pleasant remarks about the good cooking of the housewife, and if you catch a glimpse of her, as you often may behind the *qata* or curtain dividing the women's from the men's quarters, you may say *Allah i kathir khair ich ya mu'aqila* (God give you plenty, hostess of mine!). The lady will always reply with a *hawai wa 'a'afiah* or *'alaikum al 'a'afiah* (may you be satisfied!).

Having enjoyed the shaikh's hospitality, you leave after taking coffee, and the relatives, young men, big children, etc., eat up what is left of the meal: it is always amusing to see these hang back in pretended shyness, as if to say, "You know I never came here to get a meal", when the host invites them to come forward and partake with a *Yalla ya flan, gam*, or *Yalla ya rubu'a gama*, or *Thafadalu ya awlad*. He usually has to do this several times and in a rather injured voice.

The host of course does not eat with his guests, but later with the members of the family. It is always seemly for the guest, if he be a prominent person like a shaikh or Political Agent, to bring a present of rice, coffee or sugar with him for the tent. This gift he presents in casual manner before he leaves: if he wants to win more praise, he will also have brought with him materials for half a dozen frocks for the